

Antrim County Compliance Review January, 2005

At the March 2003 meeting of the Michigan Emergency Telephone Service Committee (ETSC) the ETSC voted to conduct random compliance reviews of 9-1-1 expenditures of Michigan Counties. These reviews would be for expenditures of funds generated through the provisions of the amended 9-1-1 Act, PA 32 of 1986 (PA 32). County 9-1-1 revenues include: wireless revenues distributed to counties through the State; revenues collected through county 9-1-1 surcharges on land line phones; and dispatcher training funds distributed to primary public safety answering points (PSAPs).

On August 26, 2004 the ETSC Certification Subcommittee randomly selected Antrim County for a compliance review. Certification Subcommittee Chair William Charon and subcommittee members Fyvie, Loftus, and Miller-Brown were named to the Antrim County Compliance Review Team by the chair. The years 2002, 2003, and 2004 (to date) were decided as the time period for the focus of the review.

On August 28, 2004 a letter advising Antrim County of its review was sent to the 9-1-1 supervisor, Sgt. Steve Bratschi of the Antrim County Sheriff Department. The letter requested the following information from Antrim County:

- The Antrim County 9-1-1 plan
- A copy of the 2004 and 2003 9-1-1 budgets
- Copies of agreements between the county and PSAPs (if more than one PSAP in the County)
- List of appropriate PSAP managers and their phone numbers
- Copies of budgetary reports or journals including the line items for 9-1-1 funds receipts.
- Copy of indirect costs, if they are being charged to 9-1-1
- Copy of wireless training funds, revenue journal entries and expenditures
- Name of a point of contact person

The requested information was received by the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office in a timely and organized manner.

Background

Antrim County 9-1-1 Central Dispatch (ACCD) receives the entire 9-1-1 call volume for the geographical boundaries of Antrim County. ACCD is operated through the Antrim County Sheriff Department and dispatches for all emergency service providers in Antrim County. ACCD's operating policy and procedures are established through the ACCD Board of Directors. There are written policies for operations, including a policy on dispatching the closest car to calls for service.

Antrim County implemented Enhanced 9-1-1 in 1999. The county became Phase I wireless 9-1-1 compliant in 2003. Phase II wireless 9-1-1 testing is scheduled for June of 2005. ACCD dispatches for 8 police departments, (including the sheriff department and the Kalkaska Post of the Michigan State Police), 5 emergency medical services (EMS), and 10 fire departments. In 2003 ACCD received 5,302 land line 9-1-1 calls and 1,704 wireless 9-1-1 calls. In 2003 ACCD logged 26,943 computer aided dispatch (CAD) events. ACCD employs 8 full-time dispatchers and one sergeant/director, who also has dispatching responsibilities. The sergeant/supervisor spends approximately 11% of his work time on 9-1-1 supervisory/administrative functions. The county sheriff serves as the chief administrative officer for the dispatch center, spending about two to three workdays each month on dispatch administration.

The dispatch center is a separate facility attached to the main building of the sheriff department. It was built with land line 9-1-1 surcharge revenue. The dispatch center has its own secure entrance. Consisting of about 1,386 square feet, it houses the Communications room, 9-1-1 supervisor's office, locker/restroom, equipment room, and break room. The 9-1-1 phone system is capable of taking Phase I and II wireless 9-1-1 calls. The phone system also interfaces with computerized dispatching (CAD) and mapping systems.

The land line 9-1-1 surcharge is collected by a combination of vote of Antrim County citizens and county commission action. Total land line collection is \$2.89 monthly. The first 9-1-1 land line surcharge election was passed in 1996. The surcharge has since been passed in 2000 and again in 2004. Since the wireless 9-1-1 distributions began in 2000, Antrim County has been certified by the ETSC as eligible to receive its portion of state wireless 9-1-1 funds.

Review Process

On October 8th, the members of the Antrim County compliance review team met via conference call (team members had received the copies of Antrim County Financial Reports in advance of the conference call). Based on the information provided, there were several line items that needed further clarification. Antrim County was asked to provide further information for itemized accounting for 2003 line items: Operating supplies, Uniforms, Equipment Maintenance, Equipment Maintenance Agreements, and Rent Equipment Lease. In addition, summary budgets for 2002, 2003, and 2004 (to date).

Upon receipt of these documents a meeting was scheduled with Sgt. Bratschi and a member of the Antrim County Sheriff Dept. accounting system.

Meeting with Steve Bratschi and Karen Thomas in Cadillac on November 1st, 2004:

Sgt. Bratschi provided documentation of the process in which invoices are sent to the county clerk's office for processing. Ms. Thomas explained that when invoices are received by sheriff's department they are reviewed as to which division the expenses belong to and proper line items from which the funds were to be drawn. If there are multiple items for payment on invoices, the amounts were noted individually and paid according to their respective line items. The check registers supplied by the county confirmed this process. Final processing of the bills is performed by the clerk's office.

Payroll of the dispatch staff was indicated in the appropriate line items, as were benefits and personnel costs. (Including overtime, health insurance, FICA, retirement, and worker's compensation insurance). The cost centers for 9-1-1 operations were separate from the other sheriff department functions

Meeting with Sgt. Steve Bratschi, Sheriff Terry Johnson, and County Clerk Laura Sexton in Bellaire on December 15, 2004.

Ms. Sexton provided summary accounting documents of the annual 9-1-1 revenue for 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004. The summary report confirmed that each 9-1-1 fund; wireless revenue, land line revenue, and dispatcher training revenue, was logged and tracked through its own cost center. The accounting reports also showed the interest payments for the principal balances on each fund. Additionally, the summary reports confirmed that all fund balances remaining at the previous budget year were carried over in the respective fund account into the next budget year.

December 15 Visit to Dispatch Center – Dispatchers Jenny Smith and Michael Gank were on duty on the morning the compliance review was at the center. The center has three full consoles.

Dispatch staff has close access to restroom and a break area. Policies and other manuals are kept in the center. There are usually two dispatchers on duty, although staffing limitations sometimes leaves only one on in the early morning hours. Dispatchers enter warrants and personal protection orders (PPO's) into LEIN, but are not performing any non-dispatch related duties (e.g. report processing or jail functions). ACCD uses the ProQA system for its EMS calls. Priorities are assigned to calls and pre-arrival instructions are given when appropriate. An automatic mutual aid dispatching system is in place for rescue and structure fires.

During the visit to the center Sheriff Johnson explained that the Policy and Procedure Manual was scheduled to be updated in 2005. Additional staffing slated for 2005 would give Sgt. Bratschi more time to work on administrative/supervisory duties.

Antrim County Summary

Annual Operating Budget for 2002 = 531,038
Annual Operating Budget for 2003 = 727,189
Annual Operating Budget for 2004 = 739,495

Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2002 = 76,264
Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2003 = 83,540
Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2004 = 88,706

9-1-1 Land Line Surcharge 2002 = 559,352
9-1-1 Land Line Surcharge 2003 = 537,810
9-1-1 Land Line Surcharge 2004 = 527,827

Wireless 9-1-1 Funds

Wireless funds are remitted to separate account (County Fund # 262). The funds are receipted in on both the "per county" disbursement and "per capita" disbursement. The funds are used for 9-1-1 expenses on a selected basis, with the allowable costs being expended directly from the wireless fund. Unexpended funds are carried over in the fund from each budget year into the next.

Several allowable technical advancements have been paid for through this fund. This includes the implementation of computerized mapping and a digital recorder for radio/telephone activity.

Land Line 9-1-1 Surcharge Funds

The land line surcharge funds are remitted to separate account (County Fund # 261). The funds are used to pay for the day-to-day operations of the 9-1-1 center. These costs include: radio system maintenance, dispatching staff wages and benefits, dispatch computers and a dedicated computer server, dispatch center LEIN, office supplies, memberships and subscriptions directly related to 9-1-1, generator expenses, and telephone costs. The cost of the communications center's utilities is borne by the sheriff department. Costs of accounting and payroll/benefits administration is absorbed by the county general fund through its routine operations.

Training Funds

While training money was initially put in a joint line item with other 9-1-1 operating money in 2001, a separate account (County Fund # 259) was created in 2002 and the 9-1-1 training money was appropriately transferred to that account. Documentation of this transfer was provided. All wireless training money received since that time has been receipted into Fund # 259.

While there were only two eligible training courses attended by dispatchers in 2003, there was substantially more use of dispatcher training funds in 2004. The 2001 and 2002 training distributions have been used in full in accordance with the two-year time limit established by the ETSC, making ACCD eligible for 2005 application. However, continued expenditures of the 2003 training disbursements will need to be made for 2006 disbursement eligibility.

Training Fund Distribution 2001 = 2,553
Training Fund Distribution 2002 = 4,253
Training Fund Distribution 2003 = 3,455
Training Fund Distribution 2004 = 3,465

Training Fund Expenditures 2002 = 2,418
Training Fund Expenditures 2003 = 678
Training Fund Expenditures 2004 = 4,262

Findings and Final Summary

The Antrim County 9-1-1 Plan is current and, with one exception, is in compliance with P.A. 32. The 9-1-1 plan creates a 9-1-1 Policy and Procedure Board. That board consists of the sheriff, a representative of the Michigan State Police, an emergency medical services (EMS) representative, the county emergency management coordinator, a member of the county board of commissioners, a representative of the county road commission, and three county citizens at large. The 9-1-1 board meets on a bi-monthly basis.

Necessary Corrective Action – The Antrim County 9-1-1 Plan needs to be opened and the membership of the 9-1-1 Policy and Procedure board changed to include a firefighter as required by PA 32 (MCL 484.1320 Sec. 320[2]).

Antrim County 9-1-1 currently has a fund balance of \$674,140. This fund balance is expected to be significantly reduced in the future as it is used to offset the increasing costs of operating expenses of ACCD with decreasing land line surcharge revenue. ACCD is also scheduled to add two more full-time dispatchers to its staff in 2005. Additionally, the county is currently in the process of evaluating its options for upgrading/updating its emergency responder communications system.

Recommendation - A consideration for planned growth of the operations of ACCD would be for the 9-1-1 Board to develop a long-range (3 to 5 year) plan for operations, staffing, technical projects, and funding.

The accounting system in place at Antrim County properly keeps the 9-1-1 funds separate from other county funds, both at the revenue and expenditure side. Interest is collected on the principal and transferred to the respective 9-1-1 accounts in a timely manner. In accordance with PA 32, all Antrim County 9-1-1 funds are used only for allowable 9-1-1 expenses.

In closing, based upon the documentation requested, made available and reviewed by the committee, Antrim County and its 9-1-1 operation are in full compliance with the requirements of PA 32, as amended.

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